

How to Reduce Your Workplace Injuries

Safety is the #1 way to reduce your workers' compensation costs, both direct (insurance premiums) and indirect (cost of hiring, retraining, overtime, and loss of productivity and other costs associated with work place injuries).

Most employers know that their safety record or "experience modification" determines their insurance premium. Plus a good year (or a bad year) stays with you for three years.

Studies indicate that for every \$1 invested in workplace safety, employers realize \$3 - \$10 in cost savings (direct and indirect costs).

Make Workplace Safety a Top Priority

Safety requires a comprehensive approach, and may mean all of the following:

- **Hiring** - Tell employees about the importance of safety when they start
- **Educating** - workers about safety measures and the importance of following rules
- **Training** - Properly train workers for new job duties
- **Monitoring** - Make sure employees properly follow all safety procedures, and correctly use equipment
- **Enforcing** - Institute consequences for failure to follow safety measures
- **Discussing** - Talk about safety all the time; at staff meetings, performance evaluations, etc.
- **Assessment job requirements** - Define physical capabilities for specific jobs
- **Placement** - Only place workers in jobs if they possess the necessary physical capabilities
- **Providing** - Supply personal protective equipment (i.e. safety glasses, boots, respirators)
- **Reviewing injuries** - If there is an injury figure out what went wrong, why, and try to fix it for the future
- **Identifying weaknesses** - Learn what your most frequent injuries are, and then develop strategies to address them
- **Reviewing work practices** - Know that working overtime or unsafe staffing practices may increase injuries
- **Rewarding** - Recognize or reward workers, teams, or shifts who assist or initiate training or monitoring. develop risks list or warning posters

Safety should be part of every aspect of your business. Simply telling workers to work safely is not enough.

Provide Training. It's invaluable to provide new workers proper training when it comes to safety practices. Also consider safety trainings for workers whose job duties change, and as part of your business' ongoing education practices.

Don't just talk about safety, reinforce it. Safety awareness is one small step toward reducing injuries. Follow it up with all staff, in all possible ways. Working safely should be an *integral* part of your business. It should be part of your hiring, training, education, monitoring, staffing, staff meetings, and performance evaluations, to name a few.

Safety weaknesses. **Cuts** to the hand or thumb make up *several* of the most common work injuries in Vermont. These figures point out a need for greater use of safety gloves and everything that goes along with them: glove availability, required use, education, training, supervision, consistent enforcement.....the list goes on.

Eye injuries are our second most common injury. Again, proper use of safety goggles should reduce or eliminate eye injuries. The mere availability of glasses or goggles is *not* enough. Comprehensive attention to their use is required.

Focus on *your* workplace injuries. Every business is unique and so are **your injuries**. Depending on your work, you may need to pay extra attention to: ergonomics; appropriate staffing to avoid over-exertion; ladder safety; eye safety; ventilation; breaks; hearing protection, body mechanics or work site safety, just to name a few.

Review your work practices. Common work practices may lead to work injuries. Consider your use of **overtime** work. For strenuous or repetitive work, adding overtime hours can only compound “overuse”. Hiring staff or part time staff may actually reduce overuse or over-exertion injuries. **Staffing** levels may similarly impact injuries. When a large job requires several workers, insufficient staffing can encourage workers to do more than they safely should; resulting in injuries.

The Department of Labor is here to help you provide the safest work environments. To access our resources, please visit [Project WorkSAFE](#).